

**Country Statement**  
by  
*Mr. David Grimes*  
*Assistant Deputy Minister,*  
*Meteorological Service of Canada*  
*Environment Canada*

*On behalf of*  
**The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq**  
Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern  
Economic Development Agency, Minister for the Arctic Council  
and Member of Parliament for Nunavut (Nunavut)

**At the 2014 GEO Ministerial Summit**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**  
**January 17, 2014**

Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Government of Canada and the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment and Minister Responsible for the Arctic Council, who unfortunately could not be with us here today, I would like to express our appreciation to Minister Bruno Oberle, Secretary of State, of the Swiss federal environment office and to the Swiss Government for their leadership, and thank them for organizing and hosting the GEO-X Plenary meeting and the 2014 GEO Ministerial Summit.

Canada is proud to be a supportive and active participant and partner in GEO's developments since the very beginning. We are grateful that 89 countries, the European Commission and the large body of international and regional organizations are contributing so positively to these initiatives. The *Geneva Declaration*, which Canada fully supports, acknowledges the accomplishments to date and provides a vision for future action.

This Summit presents an important milestone in the evolution of GEO and the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). As we approach the end of GEO's first ten year mandate, we can reflect on the value that GEO and its GEOSS have brought to the world and to Canada since 2005:

- Canada recognizes that GEO has played a pivotal role in coordinating international efforts to observe and understand planet Earth, providing data and observations from a wide array of systems, particularly from space missions and satellite data, which are vital to ensuring that environmental, economic and social programs and policies are informed by sound science.
- GEO has helped bring together international communities of end-users and experts, and enabled key science questions and observation needs to be defined, addressed and prioritized in response to the thrusts outlined under GEO's Societal Benefit Areas.
- Canada benefits from this international collaboration to share information and address issues of national significance, while also being able to showcase and contribute Canadian technologies and *savoir faire* in support of national, regional and global issues. In that vein, it is expected that Canada's RADARSAT Constellation mission, when operational in 2018, will contribute space-based imagery to key GEO global initiatives, such as disaster risk management, GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM) and the Global Forest Observation Initiative.
- GEO and GEOSS contribute to the health, safety and prosperity of Canada's citizens through increased understanding of the air, land and water cycles. They help foster economic development and sustainable management of our agricultural, forestry, biodiversity and energy resources while helping disaster response and mitigation. Canada recognizes the important contribution the GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM) initiative is making to global market transparency and food security, and will continue to provide leadership for the Research and Development component and associated Joint Experiments for Crop Assessment and Monitoring (JECAM) network.

- Canada, bordering three oceans and sharing stewardship with the United States of the world's largest bodies of fresh water, the Great Lakes, salutes the GEO Blue Planet initiative. Canada will continue to support the work of GEO's Blue Planet initiative. The initiative recognized the importance of the oceans and freshwater systems to the environment, weather, climate and the other societal benefit areas of GEO. Canada funded the inaugural Blue Planet Symposium, and will continue to participate to improve the integration of ocean and freshwater monitoring in the next phase of GEOSS.
- GEO's Data Sharing Principles are well aligned with the Government of Canada's Open Government Strategy, of which Open Data Policy is a key pillar.

As we look to the future of GEO, Canada would like to draw attention to important and emerging issues arising in Polar Regions, particularly the Arctic. The Arctic's climate and physical environment is changing, with widespread effects on communities and ecosystems. Canada is the current chair of the Arctic Council, and the overall theme for our chairmanship is "Development for People of the North". We consider it important to enhance the resilience and ability of Northerners to adapt to changing circumstances. GEO can play a crucial role by facilitating access to integrated data and information on the changing environmental conditions in the Arctic to support better knowledge sharing and decision making. Canada will work to ensure the continuation of GEO's next ten year plan and enhance existing efforts such as the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program. This program is a cornerstone of the Arctic Council's Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group that contributes to integrated Arctic monitoring and conserve the North's fragile ecosystem while supporting economic and societal development.

A broadened and sustained effort from member states is required to reach the attainable but challenging goal of building the system of systems. As well, in these difficult fiscal times, Canada supports GEO's plans to increase engagement with other international agencies, including UN bodies, and the private sector, to maximize the benefits of Earth Observation systems, and sustain GEO now and over the next ten years.

Mr. Chairman, Canada is a committed partner in this important endeavour. I would like to reiterate Canada's support for the GEO vision for 2025. It's only through global cooperation that we can collectively tackle the societal challenges of the future, to ensure a safer and healthier planet for all.

Thank you.